DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 441 388 HE 032 866

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TITLE	The Reform of Higher Education in Post-Soviet Russia: 1987-1997.
PUB DATE	1997-10-22
NOTE	8p.; Paper presented at the "Russia in Asia" Seminar of the Political Science Department at Southern Connecticut State University (New Haven, CT, October 22, 1997).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Change Strategies; Decentralization; Democracy; *Educational Administration; *Educational Change; Educational Finance; *Educational Philosophy; Foreign Countries; *Higher Education; Humanization; Politics of Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Reform Efforts; *Russia

ABSTRACT

This paper describes higher education reform in post-Soviet Russia. Basic educational reform began in 1987 towards the end of the Soviet period, moving through two earlier stages, and is now in the third stage. The first stage was an ideological shift in the vision of education as a social institution and a profound change in the philosophy, content, and methods of education (with an emphasis on humanization). In the second stage, the old dogmatic approach to education management was phased out, and a new concept management other than direct administration was implemented. This stage decentralized and democratized higher education to allow higher education institutions more academic and financial autonomy, created non-state institutions, and put greater emphasis on human-centered studies. It also codified the legal basis of reform. The third stage is a technical one; the main objective of which is fostering and putting into effect earlier reforms. The paper also offers details on the structure and mechanisms of the development of higher education in Russia and presents a comparative analysis of higher education in Russia and in the world's leading countries. The paper concludes with a description of Chita State Technical University, an example of an institution in the third phase of the reform process. (SM)

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ED 441 388

The Reform of Higher Education in Post-Soviet Russia: 1987-1997

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To the:

"Russia in Asia" Seminar
Political Science Department
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New Haven, CT 06515-1355
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October 22, 1997

HE 032 866

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The Reform of Higher Education in Post-Soviet Russia (1987-97).

Basic concepts of the current educational reform began to be discussed in the Russian Federation in 1987, toward the end of the Soviet period although they had been developed somewhat earlier. Reform has gone through two stages already and is now in its third.

The first stage (1987-89) pursued two objectives:

I. An ideological shift in the vision of education as a social institution conditioned by the need to answer changing political and social-economic parameters as Russia was moving toward democratization of the society (glasnost) and restructuring its economy (perestroika). It certainly was a challenge. Reform had to affect the entire social stratification of the country, therefore it was rejected by a certain part of educational community, especially the older generation. Even today, in the flagship national university, Moscow State University, there are opponents (open and covert) of educational reform.

II. A profound change in the philosophy, content and methods of education, with an emphasis on humanization and hence on transition towards personality-oriented techniques and new methods in developmental education. Outside advisors, formed into "public circles" were summoned to give thought to new education standards, to a multi-level system of training, to reform mechanisms and to the impact of the transition to democracy and market economy on higher education.

This stage involved restructuring the Ministry of Higher Education and a considerable reshuffling of its personnel.

The Second stage of the reform (1990-92) and its objectives:

I. Phasing out the old dogmatic approach to education management and implementing the new concept: management instead of direct administration.

The old system of education management was based on the Marxist-Leninist philosophy and Communist ideology; decision-making was the prerogative of party committees (or, at least, their participation was a permanent part of decision-making). In 1991, all political party activity and all political movements, in all educational institutions, as well as in the Armed Forces, were banned by a Presidential decree. Through the years, though, quite a few universities tried to ignore the decree.

II. Decentralization and democratization of higher education which brought about more academic and financial autonomy and flexibility for higher educational institutions, creation of non-state units and greater emphasis on human-centered studies.

III. Elaboration of the legal basis of the reform.

In 1990-1992 the new Law of the Russian Federation on Education was outlined; within its framework a Higher Education Regulation was adopted in 1993 which described the scheme of higher education in Russia and its content and goals under market economy conditions. For example, it specified the compulsory election of president by the faculty (formerly, presidents/rectors were appointed by the Ministry in Moscow). Also adopted was the Law on post-graduate vocational education which stipulated the monitoring activities which have to ensure a proper degree of coordination across the country.

The third phase of the reform (1993-97) is a technical one. Its main objective is to foster and put into effect the results of the previous phases. Due to the general decline of the situation in Russia, though, the reform is getting almost nowhere. Russia's higher education today is undergoing two processes. One of them, an outward process, is hindering the reform and pushing it to failure due to reduced and unstable funding and the subsequent decay of material resources. The other, inner process, is fighting back relying on self-development of the system, marked growth of its inner potential, diversification of education services and preserving Russia's best educational traditions. In the confrontation of these processes the latter is gaining an upper hand; therefore, the decline in the sphere of education is less expressed compared to other spheres of economy.

The Structure and Mechanisms of the Development of Higher Education in Russia.

There are 992 higher education schools in Russia (to serve 150 million people), among them 661 state and 331 non-state institutions. Of 661 state schools, 236 are universities, 180 academies, 132 institutes, 88 military higher educational schools plus 18 specialized federal institutions and 7 municipal schools.

The majority of the institutions (67% state and 81.2% non-state) are situated in the European part of Russia whereas only 21.6% of state and 11.7% non-state institutions are in Siberia and Far East (whose territory is 3.5 times as big as that of European Russia; the population of which is about 32 million).

State schools give training to 2,542,000 students of the Russian Federation and have about 40,000 foreign students. Non-state student contingent amounts to 256,000. The average number of students in state institutions is 4,400. Students are trained in 91 fields and 428 major disciplines.

Despite the current difficulties and economic vulnerabilities, higher education today is in no less demand than before. For example, in Siberia, the average competition ratio is 2.6 applicants to one place. Also the percent of students in the normal college years who were getting higher education the last five years all across Russia is as follows:

1992 - 2%
1993 - 4%
1994 - 5%
1996 - 8.9%
1997 - 12%

As yet, there are no institutions jointly funded by the state, public organizations, private donations, etc. Tuition in non-state institutions varies between 6,200,000 rubles (=$1150) and 15,120,000 rubles ($2.520). The stipend (students' pocket money) is 82,000 rubles ($14) monthly; students who show excellent academic progress can get as much as 500,000 rubles ($84). Students contracted for the studies by industrial enterprises get 1,500,000 rubles (=$255). The average working people's salary in Russia is 1,110,000 ($190).

The chief financing source for higher education has always been and is the federal budget. Under the Law of the Russian Federation on Education, higher education is supposed to get not less than 3% of the budget the federal government allots for expenditures. The actual financial support, though, was 2,7% in 1992, 2% in 1993, 2.1% in 1994, 2.11% in 1995 and 2.6% in 1996. The financial deficit in higher education (between the required and received funds) is currently estimated as 250%. Over the last two years higher education received money only enough for the staff pay and student stipends. Meanwhile, all technical equipment, obsolete as it is, is falling apart all the more.

Since the legislative basis of the reform is not complete yet, multi-channel financing has not become a practice in Russia; otherwise higher education might have had more financial support. At the same time institutions are looking for alternative financial possibilities offering, for example, education services on a pay basis or entrepreneurial activity within the system. The average volume of extra-budget funding across Russia is 25% of the federal funding, in some cases 50% and more. Unfortunately, faulty tax policy cuts possibilities for multi-channel and multi-level funding of educational institutions. The faculty in higher education institutions is made up of expert teachers of whom 50% hold degrees of Doctor or Candidate of Science (precisely, of 234,000 higher education teachers in the Russian Federation 7% are Doctors and 50% Candidates of Science).* The teacher-student relationship is one to 10.6 (in the major universities one to 4-6). Teaching in higher education institutions does not currently bring high salaries; these are lower than for qualified workers, in contradiction to the Law on Education and President's (Yeltsin) Decree No.1 which stipulates that salaries for educators to be twice as much as that of industrial workers.

*Candidate of Science = more or less the U.S. Ph.D.
Doctor of Science – a post Ph.D. "habiliation" diploma as in Germany, Poland and other countries.

Comparative Analysis of Higher Education in Russia and in the World's Leading Countries (UNISCO sources)

Serious difficulties prevent the system of higher education in Russia from playing its role as prime factor of social and economical development of the country.

Specialists with higher education in Russia average only 15.7%; there are only 190 students per 10.000 of the population and only 27 graduates. In the USA and Japan the corresponding indices are twice as high.

Over the last 30 years the number of students in American Universities and colleges has grown up to 9.200.000 (in Russia to 2.500.000); in Japan by 4 times, in Korea by 15, in France by two times. Korea places third as to the number of students per 10.000 people (the USA places first: 34 - 10.000). In this context the decrease of the student contingent in Russia by 500.000 over 15 years is a tendency as negative as it is alarming. By comparison, none of the major countries in the world has ever reduced their student contingent in time of crisis.

Russia hosts only 4% of students from abroad; the USA - 33%.

In the USA 80% of students study in state and 20% in non-state institutions. In Germany all higher education institutions except theological are state ones; over the recent years a few non-state schools have been opened there. In Russia, the ration of state and non-state institutions is 90% to 10%.

Tuition fees (in % to average salary of state officials) in state and non-state schools:

USA	12% - 26%
Russia	58% - 131%
Japan	15% - 30%

In Germany, high education is free; students only pay for books, room and board. The student-teacher ratio cited in expert studies is:

16 - 1 in the USA (average; in some institutions 40 - 1; in leading universities 4/8 - 1).
22 - 1 in France
9.2 - 1 in Japan (3/6 - in leading universities).
9.9 - 1 in Germany
10.6 - 1 in Russia

The difference in this proportion is of a more developmental character; it encourages students to study extensively outside the classroom (class-room studies take 10/18 hours per

week).

In Russia and Germany higher education has always pursued the goal of training young people for future work (classroom studies under the guidance of teachers - lectures, labs, seminars - take 36 or more hours a week).

Chita State Technical University
(in the third phase of education reform).

CSTU was opened in 1974 as a Polytechnical Institute and transformed into the university in 1995. It has a multi-level system of training:

I level	- two year program; diploma of incomplete higher education
II level	- four-year program diploma of completed higher education (Bachelors degree).
III level	-5/6-year program, specialist diploma (Masters degree).

The University trains students in 27 fields (12 in 1973): geology, power engineering, machine-building, construction, humanities, journalism, law, etc.

An expert commission from the Association of Russian Technical Universities has assessed CSTU's academic and scientific potential as quite high. Of 340 members of the University faculty, 32 are doctors of science and full professors; 160 candidates of Science as assistant professors. This index (56.5%) is in keeping with the general tendency in other universities in Russia.

CSTU regularly has visiting scholars from other Russian major universities (Moscow, St. Petersberg, Novossibirsk). CSTU has its own "aspirantura"* in 16 scientific branches: full time (3 years) and part-time (4 years), and two specialized expert Councils where "aspirants" can defend "Candidate" and "Doctor" dissertations.

There are three academic associations with branches at the University: the International Academy of Higher Education, the International Academy for Ecology and Life Preservation and the Mining Academy (of which former prime-minister V.S. Chernomyrdyn is also a member).

The University is engaged in conducting research on 15 major scientific issues.

*programs leading to Candidate and Doctor degrees

The student admission policy is regulated by universities themselves. In CSTU, a special center takes care of pre-university training of its prospective applicants within the framework of a) preparatory courses (on a pay basis); b) technical lyceum and lyceum-type classes in secondary (high) schools; c) all-Russia testing system of volunteer high-school students who, if they score high enough, automatically become university students.

The general rule of admissions is competition-based selection. Applicants with high examination scores are admitted on a non-pay basis. Those who do not stand the competition can be admitted on a commercial basis ($2100-2500 per year). Graduates of the technical lyceum showing outstanding academic performance can be admitted to the sophomore level. We also cooperate with three junior colleges in Chita and welcome their best graduates to become third-year students of CSTU.

In 1997, of 925 first-year students 745 do not pay their tuition and 180 do. Competition averaged 2.5 applicants for one place (5, in some special fields).